United Nations A/60/PV.75

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

75th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 March 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 128 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/650/Add.7)

The President: I would like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/60/650/Add.7, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/60/650 and addenda 1 to 6, Eritrea has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 46 and 120 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/733)

The President: In accordance with paragraph 163 (b) of General Assembly resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005, the Assembly has before it a report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Mandating and delivering: analysis and recommendations to facilitate the review of mandates", contained in document A/60/733.

I warmly welcome the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, and invite him to take the floor to introduce his report.

The Secretary-General: Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your appointment as Foreign Minister of your country. It is certainly Sweden's gain; I trust it will not be a loss for the United Nations, because I know how high a priority both you and your country give to the work of strengthening this Organization. I might also add, perhaps more for the benefit of the permanent representatives in the Hall, that it is a clear indication that a United Nations assignment is good for career enhancement.

Six months ago, heads of State or Government set in motion a potentially historic process by resolving to strengthen and update the programme of work of the United Nations so that it responds to the contemporary requirements of Member States. To that end, they called on Member States to review all mandates older than five years originating from the resolutions of the General Assembly and other relevant organs. To facilitate that review, they asked me to provide analysis and recommendations. The report before the Assembly (A/60/733) responds to that request, providing a framework for its consideration and the initial tools that it will need to undertake its review. It does not

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contain the full range of analyses of the Organization's work that can be made, but the Secretariat stands ready to provide additional analysis if it would be useful.

The mandates that you members of the Assembly and your predecessors have adopted over the past 60 years reflect the desire of your countries to see the Organization play an effective part in helping to solve the world's problems. Yet, great as this Organization is, and hard though many of its staff work, it cannot do everything. As a great French statesman once said, "Gouverner, c'est choisir".

Dag Hammarskjöld, my great predecessor, conducted the first review of mandates, at the request of the membership, in 1954. In appraising the Secretariat's work, he came to the conclusion that the very nature of the responsibilities that must be assumed by the Secretary-General and his senior staff imposes a limit on the volume of the tasks that can be handled effectively. That is even truer today, when the Organization and the number of mandates are so much greater. There is only so much that the Secretary-General and his senior managers can effectively deliver and manage, especially when they are asked to do so within limited resources.

Today, even more than in 1954, Member States find it hard to cope with the mass of documentation that they themselves request, and that in turn makes it harder for them to oversee the Organization effectively. As in 1954, responsible intergovernmental organs must make a choice between urgent and less urgent mandates. This is not a call for the United Nations to do less, though that might be one result. It is a call for it to do better.

This review could have a lasting impact not only on what we do, but on how we do it. The 1954 review, for example, led the membership to reduce the number of reports, and the length of documents in general, as well as to merge two previous departments into a single, unified Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The aim must be to make sure that the solutions and strategies we develop to deal with global issues are complementary and mutually reinforcing, so that the Organization as a whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

That is why the decision to conduct the review, even if it was not the most glamorous that heads of State and Government made last September, was one of the most meaningful and potentially historic. It is also a daunting challenge. While there are real opportunities to achieve results in the short term, to conduct a full review of mandates will take time and sustained commitment. But the outcome could be extremely rewarding, particularly for those we serve around the world.

Members of the Assembly, it is your review; you are the ones who are going to undertake it. I am only giving you the tools to conduct it: an online registry of mandates and, in the report before you, an analytical framework.

The registry, which responds to requests from several Member States, is a searchable electronic inventory of still-active mandates originating from the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. It will enable you to find all the mandates you have adopted and to view them in a convenient way.

The report also highlights patterns in the mandates, and gives examples of some of the problems. I hope that you will examine those areas, and many others, to see what can be done to strengthen and update our Organization.

Many issues have been raised by Member States in consultations over the past six months. Not all of them are addressed in the report, but the registry of mandates should enable you to review any active mandate, or group of mandates, that you believe merits it.

The task facing you is not easy one, partly because we do not yet have the kind of information, on every mandate, that may be required for a fully meaningful review. You may well decide that you need more strategic information on the effectiveness of the mandates, enabling you to judge how well they contribute to the overall goals of the Organization as you move ahead with the task of making the United Nations truly accountable to its Members and ensuring that it fulfils its commitments to people around the world. The Secretariat stands ready to give further support, as and when you request it.

Other processes under way, including the management reform efforts, the review of governance and oversight, the examination of system-wide coherence and the revitalization of the General

Assembly itself, will provide the tools necessary to implement mandates better. For its part, the mandate review should help you, the Member States, to determine the priorities for the Organization. Those different processes should thus be interdependent, and mutually reinforcing.

The review of mandates is a unique opportunity to strengthen and adapt our Organization to the priorities of today. I am sure you will not fail to seize it, and I assure you that, as you proceed, you can count on my and the Secretariat's support.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for his warm words of congratulation. I shall remain actively involved in the work of the General Assembly and in the reform process of the Organization until the end of my term in September. I am sure that all of my colleagues here noted the Secretary-General's remarks about career openings. I would urge that negotiators on United Nations reform also be elevated to the ministerial level.

The review of mandates that Member States are about to undertake, following the decision by world leaders at the 2005 world summit, constitutes a unique opportunity to strengthen the Organization. In a world with a great need for global solutions and a strong United Nations, we must make sure that our work responds to the key needs and key priorities of the peoples of the world.

The discussions on management and Secretariat reform, based on the Secretary-General's report "Investing in the United Nations" (A/60/692), seek to ensure that the United Nations can carry out its tasks in an effective and efficient manner. The process of the mandate review should aim at outlining what those tasks should be.

To embark on this complex journey without a map is impossible. The report introduced today (A/60/733) and its corresponding database of mandates form the map drawn up to facilitate the review. I would like to warmly thank the Secretary-General and his team, including Assistant Secretary-General Robert Orr and the Strategic Planning Unit, for all their hard and tireless work in preparing this document and for supporting the General Assembly in this process.

Now is the time for Member States to assume responsibility for carrying out the mandate review process. Let me express my gratitude for the excellent work done by my esteemed Co-Chairs, Ambassador Akram of Pakistan and Ambassador Rock of Canada. Through the informal consultations of the plenary held earlier, the Secretariat and Member States were able to come to a common understanding of the information needed for a meaningful and constructive review of mandates, which is now reflected in the document and the database before us.

The process of the mandate review will now be continued under the leadership of the Co-Chairs. The first informal plenary consultations on the mandate review will be held next week at a time to be announced shortly. At that meeting, Member States will have an opportunity to make their general statements on this issue. On the basis of the views expressed, the Co-Chairs will outline a work plan for the further consideration of this matter.

I would like to announce that tomorrow at 11.30 a.m., there will be a tutorial or demonstration, organized by the Secretariat for the benefit of delegates, on how to utilize or, if you will, navigate the database on the mandate review. Details will be announced in the *Journal*.

I am very much aware that this mandate review will be a challenging task for all of us. I am confident that, through dialogue and a constructive approach, we will be able to achieve good and meaningful results.

In concluding, I should like to turn briefly to the question of the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide", which was presented to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General at the 71st plenary meeting, on 7 March 2006.

Following informal consultations, I wish to inform the General Assembly that the report of the Secretary-General to which I just referred, issued as document A/60/692, and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, issued as document A/60/735, will be introduced in the Fifth Committee on Monday, 3 April 2006 at 10 a.m.

As members are aware, those two reports were issued under agenda items 46, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields",

and 120, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit". The reports will be reissued tomorrow under the following additional agenda items: 118, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals"; 122, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations"; 124, "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007"; 128, "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations"; 129, "Human resources management"; and 136, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations". I invite the Chairman and the Bureau of the Fifth Committee to work out a programme of work for the consideration of those reports.

I expect the Fifth Committee to conclude its consideration and to submit its report on this matter as soon as possible, or at the latest by 18 April 2006, in order to enable the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive and detailed report by May 2006 for consideration by the Fifth Committee.

I shall request the Secretary-General to facilitate the process by ensuring the provision of the necessary conference services for the Fifth Committee. I shall, of course, remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.